Salem County Office of Archives and Records Management PARIS GRANT OVERVIEW

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By Sean A. Curry, PARIS Grant Administrator, NJ Division of Archives and Records Management

The Public Archives and Records Infrastructure Support (PARIS) Grants Program remains the nation's leader in promoting and supporting robust archives and records management programs in local government.

With PARIS about to enter its fifth year, more and more municipalities are benefiting. Created by public law in 2003, the PARIS program is a competitive program that allows New Jersey's local governments—counties and municipalities—to apply for funding for records management projects. The program is administered by the New Jersey Division of Archives and Records Management (DARM) and oversight is provided by the State Records Committee (SRC), which sets annual priorities, funding levels, and makes the awards annually.

The highest priority of the PARIS program is shared services, encouraging local governments to work together to tackle common records management problems. Intrinsic in this is the ideal that the 21 county governments act as archives and records management hubs for their municipalities, offering regional services such as inactive records storage, training and disaster recovery.

For example, all 21 county governments have hosted records management inventory, needs assessment and strategic planning projects for their interested municipalities. This is the first step in not only achieving PARIS funding eligibility, but in formulating a road-map leading to robust records management programs. These projects also determine common problems across government lines, and result in summary reports that provide recommendations for tackling these records management problems collectively.

Shared services projects, such as these, have seen huge savings which can be passed on to New Jersey taxpayers. Single procurement has made the process easier, and allowed vendors to reduce costs due to collective planning and kick-off meetings, and systematic roll-out of the project. What has cost \$40,000 for one municipality seeking a vendor on their own has translated to an average of \$10,000 per municipality that has participated in the group project.

To date, 515 of the 566 municipalities in New Jersey have benefited from these planning projects, providing each with an individual inventory, assessment report and strategic plan. The breakdown of participation is as follows:

County	Total	Participated	Percentage
Atlantic	23	23	100.00
Bergen	70	61	87.14
Burlington	40	33	82.50
Camden	37	37	100.00
Cape May	16	16	100.00
Cumberland	16	14	100.00
Essex	22	22	100.00
Gloucester	24	24	100.00
Hudson	12	12	100.00
Hunterdon	26	23	88.46
Mercer	13	13	100.00
Middlesex	25	25	100.00

Monmouth	53	40	75.47
Morris	39	36	92.31
Ocean	33	25	75.76
Passaic	16	14	87.50
Salem	15	15	100.00
Somerset	21	21	100.00
Sussex	24	23	95.83
Union	21	19	90.48
Warren	22	19	86.36
Total	566	515	90.99

New Jersey should be proud of this embracement of shared services, especially with the lines of communication between local governments growing daily. PARIS has supported and funded all forms of shared services arrangements: county-to-county, county-to-municipality, municipality-to-municipality, and even municipality-to-county partnerships.

Besides the initial planning projects, PARIS has funded other types of shared services projects in its four years of operation.

Records Organization, Inventory and Purging. The initial assessment reports have reflected that many local governments are in the need of a more detailed records inventory, and a complete reorganization of all records. Many records are stored in inadequate boxes, are not labeled, or mixed together. In many communities, records well beyond retention are still being stored, thus leaving the town vulnerable to OPRA requests. It is estimated that the average municipality could dispose of between 30 percent and 60 percent of their records following the records retention and disposition guidelines overseen by DARM.

The SRC has, therefore, made organization and purging projects a high priority for funding, to allow governments to "catch up" with retention, and have complete inventory control before beginning other projects. Many counties have sponsored these projects on behalf of their municipalities, including Bergen, Camden, Cape May, Essex, Hudson, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Salem, Somerset and Union. Some larger municipalities have received funding to tackle inventory problems themselves, including Woodbury City, Freehold Borough, Hamilton Township (Atlantic), Mount Holly Township, Bridgeton City, just to name a few. Thanks to these projects DARM has seen a huge increase in records destruction requests between 2007 and 2008.

Disaster Recovery and Preparedness. In the wake of such national tragedies as 9-11 and Hurricane Katrina, disaster recovery and preparedness remain a high priority of all levels of government. The thought of how any government will operate during, and after a disaster is an important one, including how access to vital records (those needed for your government to operate) will be achieved. PARIS has supported the development of disaster plans throughout New Jersey, allowing local governments to identify their threats, and to plan for the recovery in the case of a disaster. Union County, for example, was funded to provide individual disaster plans for most of their municipalities. Cape May County has opened a Regional Recovery Center, a structure designed to withstand a category IV hurricane, where all municipal and county offices can back-up and recover electronic data, and attend disaster training sessions. Other counties, such as Atlantic, Cumberland, Gloucester, Hudson, Hunterdon and Morris have increased their infrastructure to begin sharing recovery operations.

Records Storage. Most assessment reports also include the problem of inadequate storage for public records. Due to lack of appropriate space, records are being stored in basements, attics, trailers, corners and other sub-par locales. This includes historical records, some dating back to the 1600s. PARIS has funded projects that allow records to be stored more appropriately. This ranges from simple shelving projects, to complex designs for centralized, county-run records storage facilities. Monmouth County, for example, implemented a program called MRMARC (Municipal Records in the Monmouth County Archives and Records Center). PARIS funded shelving in the county's archives is being made available to all 53 municipalities, to allow them to store their most historical records. Hunterdon County was funded to expand their existing records storage center, to allow all of the county's municipalities to store inactive and historical records in a fully compliant environment. Rather then constructing 26 separate records storage centers, this allows the municipalities to pool their resources for one structure under the control of the county government. Burlington, Camden,

Gloucester, Morris and Salem Counties were funded to prepare the initial studies and plans for centralized storage that can be made available to their municipalities.

Staffing. PARIS has seen an increase in shared staff resources. Some smaller municipalities are not in the position to sustain a dedicated records management professional, so instead they may be able to use the services of staff under the control of other municipalities or counties. Hudson County, for example, has staff that visits municipalities to assist with records organization and purging. Cape May and Union Counties have done the same, even providing professional archivists on staff.

These are just a few examples of how municipalities in New Jersey have been benefiting from PARIS funding, through their participation in creative shared services projects. As PARIS moves forward, shared services will remain a high priority, allowing projects that realize not only great results but tax savings. More information on the PARIS program, including staff contact information, may be found by visiting www.njarchives.org/links/paris.html.